



### VANTHCS Honors Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day. This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with a new meaning, "My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring."



Excerpt from King's "I Have A Dream" speech delivered on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC, August 28, 1963.



The MLK program at SRMVC, "In the Spirit of Unity and Service, Remember! Celebrate! Act!", was an encouragement for every American to commit themselves to world peace. Rev. Cecil Jones, Pastor of Little Bethel Baptist Church, was featured as keynote speaker (*left*), and employees read passages of Dr. King's most memorable speeches.

Activities at Dallas VAMC featured dancers from Lisbon Elementary, an EEO adopted school, (*center*) as well as keynote address delivered by Claude Platt, who shared his experiences as a member of the Tuskegee Airman during World War II (*right*).





### *From the Director ...*

January normally represents a renewal or a commitment to be a better you - "I'm going to spend more time with my family" or "This is the year I stop smoking." I hope you share my resolution to press on to excellence - not just because it's the right thing to do but because what we do here provides health care to America's heroes. Not only do veterans deserve it -- they've earned it!

**Betty Bolin Brown**

## The BIG 50!!!



VANTHCS honored Clarence Jones recently during a ceremony recognizing his **F-I-F-T-Y** years of government service. Assistant Director Eric Jacobsen presented a commendation to Clarence with his wife, Brenda, standing by his side.

While 24 of that has been at Dallas VAMC, he spent 26 years as a marine and retired as an aircraft maintenance chief. He has no plans to retire because he loves his job in Laundry.



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*Commemorating 75 Years of Service*

By Allen Rich

## Freedom isn't free

January 30, 2006 was a beautiful day across Fannin County. Ken Bolyard and John Moore were thinking about fishing and other peaceful aspects of everyday life in rural North Texas. Both men look to be a young 58 and both are employed at Sam Rayburn Memorial Veterans Center in Bonham. Oh, and they have at least one more experience in common. Thirty-eight years ago, on January 30, 1968, both men were stationed in Vietnam and witnessing the first moments of the Tet Offensive unfold.

"We knew it was coming," John says matter-of-factly, as he described the days leading up to a deceptive series of strategic military maneuvers staged by the North Vietnamese to coincide with Tet, the lunar new year and the most important holiday observed in Vietnam. "It wasn't a surprise. We slept in our fatigues and boots for a week." As a member of the Army Security Agency, John Moore was privy to a lot of U.S. intelligence as well as logistics data being compiled about a massive troop and equipment buildup by the Viet Cong. Even as the truce was being planned for Tet and as South Vietnamese troops were being sent home to enjoy the country's biggest holiday, traffic heading south on the Ho Chi Minh Trail increased ten-fold. Something big was in the works. John's responsibility was to protect the runway at Ben Hou, a key staging facility used jointly by the U.S. Army and Air Force. And his first thoughts as the enemy emerged from the brush 300 yards away? "They looked like kids," Mr. Moore said quietly. Looks can be deceptive, however, much like the truce that turned into one of the turning points of the war in Vietnam. What the young Viet Cong soldiers lacked in weaponry was more than made up for in sheer numbers. While these combatants were equipped with rifles, mortars and explosives designed to crater the airstrip at Ben Hou, the fear was that the Viet Cong would use vastly superior troop numbers and simply overrun the American positions despite the staggering casualties that tactic would no doubt bring. Ken Bolyard was an Army paratrooper facing a very different set of circumstances. Ken was stationed along the Cambodian border at a small outpost, but, like John, he knew the attack was coming. "There were times when we wished it would just *happen*," Mr. Bolyard recalls. "It was a tremendous mental test for our troops." While there was no airport or runway in Ken's situation that would be an obvious target by the opposing troops, an isolated location brought a different set of difficult psychological circumstances to bear. When the steady increase in small-weapons fire and mortar attacks from the surrounding jungle signaled the beginning of the Tet Offensive, there was no way of knowing the enemy's numbers or from which direction they might attack. And even hundreds of miles from where John Moore was defending an important airfield, the fear soldiers like Ken Bolyard had to face was the same: "They will try to overrun us." They didn't. Or they *couldn't*. At the positions Ken and John helped defend, intense fighting lasted five days and six nights, but it would take months for all aspects of the offensive to run its course across the mountains, caves and jungles of Vietnam. Analysts now say the Tet Offensive was a major military failure by the North Vietnamese, which suffered casualties ranging from 35,000 up to 45,000 soldiers. At the same time, soldiers like John and Ken realized this was a battle with no winners. U.S. casualties, combined with their South Vietnamese, South Korean and Australian allies, were just over 4,300 and as this war played out on TV screens during the 6 o'clock news, America came to grips with the fact that this would be a long-term conflict. The simmering debate over U.S. involvement in Indochina spilled into the streets. After laying their life on the line, when John and Ken were finally sent back to the states, they were advised not to even wear their uniform when the plane landed in California. "I wish they had flown me straight to Ivanhoe, Texas," John says now. Everyone seems to remember a troubled President Lyndon Johnson announcing he would not seek a second term as a nation struggled with its responsibility on the other side of the globe. In the turbulent days ahead, Richard Nixon edged out Hubert Humphrey in the 1968 presidential election by a very narrow margin. However, if it is fair to use the American voting record as an indicator of how the average citizen felt about the global struggle between communism and democracy, then remember the cover of Time Magazine after the presidential election in 1972: The photo was of Nixon, a politician known for his hard-line stance against the spread of communism, after a landslide victory. "You have to stop aggression," Ken says in closing, "or it has a domino effect. All some people know how to do is kill, steal and destroy. If you ignore it long enough, you wake up one day and it is staring you in the face. Freedom isn't free. It is bought and paid for by men and women in military service."

**From the writer:** *I could never write the story those guys deserve. I spent way too much time learning from them and not enough time working on my notes. I hope some of our young men can realize how different their life would be had they graduated in 1966 instead of 2006 ...we owe some of that to Ken and John.*





## Around VANTHCS

FWOPC is proud of its new X-Ray machine. The unit produces all digital images, which is the best improvement feature from the former unit that relied on actual film processing to read the results. This feature alone is a huge time saver since FWOPC averages 70 X-ray studies per day, with each study using between 2-4 exposures or separate images. This system allows the technician to see every exposure 3-6 secs after the shot is taken. If the view is good, it is immediately uploaded into the NTX PACS system, making the image readable in Dallas, Bonham and Fort Worth - most importantly, immediately available to Dr. Sam Jagoda, staff Radiologist at FWOPC who interprets the studies. If more views are needed, it takes only a few minutes to make more, which means little wait time for the patient.



X-ray Technician Carlos Maldonado makes some adjustments.



X-ray Technician Steve Russell working in the control booth.

With the old machine, the time to complete a study and process the film took 10 minutes. The patient had to sit and wait while the image was processed so the technician could ensure the film was usable. If it wasn't, the process started over again. If a provider in Dallas or Bonham needed the results, the film had to be physically transported to that facility. The VA was first to implement an all electronic records system, and VANTHCS maintains state-of-the-art equipment to enhance quality of care for veterans.

**Congratulations to New Orleans VAMC - its 10<sup>th</sup> floor outpatient clinic began receiving patients in December.**



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